

Obituary: Prof. Dr. Christian Puff (1949–2013)



Ta Phraya National Park, Sa Kaeo, Thailand – *Montri Tanaros*

Prof. Dr. Christian Puff, the Austrian specialist botanist on the family Rubiaceae, joined the Flora of Thailand project on a voluntary basis from 1980. During the past year, Prof. Puff had untiringly undertaken several expeditions in difficult to reach areas, and took great interest in exploring Thai Rubiaceae and photographing Thailand's varied natural landscapes and plant diversity. He made sure he encountered a great variety of the country's vegetation and plant associations, but he also saw the deterioration of the environment in Thailand. As a consequence, his efforts culminated in the production of many useful botanical books for Thailand in collaboration with Thai colleagues, i.e. "*Rubiaceae of Thailand: a pictorial guide to the indigenous and cultivated genera*", "*Plants of Khao Yai National Park*", "*Plants of Doi Inthanon National Park*", and "*Plants of Kaeng Krachan National Park*". He also wrote ecological articles on ecology, vegetation and floristic composition, which were especially fruitful to the Thai flora, e.g. "*Living under water for up to 4 months of the year: observations on the rheophytes of the Mekong River in the Pha Team National Park area (Thailand/Laos border)*". He supervised two Thai botanists during their PhD projects: Kitichate Sridith and Voradol Chamchumroon, and supported several young Thai botanists during their visits to the Institute of Botany, University of Vienna. Prof. Puff's contribution was ongoing to the present, with the most encouraging being his website on Thai Rubiaceae, as well as a number of genera of

Rubiaceae which he had revised now waiting to be printed in the Flora of Thailand. Many of his initiatives were conducted together with Thai collaborators at the Forest Herbarium, Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, and together their books and publications have received broad international recognition, and served as the basis for much work on the Flora by Thai botanists.

Since he joined the Flora of Thailand Project, he has spent more than 40 years coming to Thailand for expeditions. In the last few years he began to teach on student trips about tropical forests and plant habitats with his great knowledge - which undoubtedly shared with the BKF staff who accompanied him.

Prof. Puff devoted his life to the work on the Flora of Thailand and particularly on the Rubiaceae. The image of Prof. Puff carrying his camera with a bag filled with photography equipment walking through the forest will be forever impressed in our memories. We will never forget his fondness for fried buns ('pa-tong-ko') for breakfast which he called a 'chromosome with pandanus jam'. Last but not least, without Prof. Puff the Rubiaceae of Thailand would never have been brought so far into the current excellent foundation that it is today. He will always be fondly remembered by Thai colleagues and his name will forever remain in the history of The Flora of Thailand.

Kongkanda Chayamarit & Rachun Pooma